An appeal for solidarity to every justice-loving people

The urban and rural working class population of India is living through a life of unutterable misery, injustice and economic oppression. Since the beginning of the market liberalization and privatization, in the last two decades whatever profit is gained; literally all has been consumed by the elite 15% of the total Indian population while the disparity between the rich and poor has disgustingly widened. Thus, these 20 years of rapid economic development means nothing to the people whose blood and tears actually yielded it. On the contrary they plunged into more misery than earlier. Government data alone is enough to justify this claim. The all we got is nothing but the false promises from several governments elected and changed in Delhi so far but nothing has actually changed and we remain the same.

Whatever constitutional and democratic rights we have managed to gain through several struggles and sacrifices, most of them are snatched back again. The age old labour laws drafted in our constitution are insufficient enough and hardly have any relevance with practice as well. And to camouflage its inability, whatever new laws are introduced by the government, they are either mostly ineffective and fraudulent, or pro-capitalist. These labour laws are not only just vague but also the whole process for justice is so complex and lengthy that a poor labourer hardly have any chance to get justice out of it. The number of labour dept offices including the officers and the staffs are vastly inadequate and instead of fulfilling its duty of enforcing the labour laws, these labour departments end up with serving the industry owners in most of the cases; of course in lieu of mutual benefits. Even the number of labour courts and industrial tribunals are enormously less than needed. For the working class people of India the basic rights to live, guaranteed by the Indian constitution remains no more than a ritual; thus become meaningless. The word civil liberty and democratic right seems alien to us. Adding to its woes various black laws are specifically made to suppress directly or indirectly, any voice raised against these atrocities. Even the autocratic bureaucracy are always kept handy by the political system to counter and annihilate any strike or other democratic forms of resistance, which is again the rights guaranteed by the constitution.

The basic right such as minimum wage, proper limit of the working hour, ESI, job card is not available to more than 90% of the industrial and rural laborers of India. While living and as well as working for 12-14 hours at a stretch in a hellish, unhygienic and dangerous condition they could hardly fetch themselves the basic needs, required for life. Even in these days of severe price-rise,

most of the factory workers are paid a paltry sum, ranging between 1800 to 4500 rupees for 8 hours of work. In case of death or injury due to the accidents frequently occurred in the workplaces, they are hardly compensated and often not even provided with the basic medication as well, and rather sacked from the job. Most of the workers here are contract, casual, wage and piece-rate labourer and not even a single labour law is ever implemented for them.

Looking at this situation we have made a charter, covering all the demands of the whole working class people of the country and we the working class people of India, would like to let the parliament and GOI know that, we are not going to bear any more atrocities practiced upon us. Enough is enough. We need justice and our rights back and we will regain it at any cost. This is just the beginning of a long march. And to commemorate this we hereby present this charter to the people's representatives occupying the parliament and also the parties ruling in the centre; demanding a life of dignity we deserve with fulfilling other basic needs to live, our democratic and constitutional rights along with the equal share of profits and benefits our country is yielding through various means and measures. This charter has a total number of 26 categories of demands which represents almost all the various needs and political demands of the working class people of India.

On the forth coming labor day the workers from several parts of the country will (1 may, 2011) knock on the parliament in Delhi, armed with this charter signed by thousand of workers across the country.

As for the present, we are not asking the deaf occupying the parliament for anything more than just implementing the basic rights guaranteed by the constitution of the land, for us. We are just asking for the minimum requirements, a human being needs to live. The struggle of the working class has to travel many a miles ahead but for the time being let us start this long journey with the demand for our democratic rights, as a first step. The significance of this movement is that, rather than dividing in different flags and banners, the workers are united under the combined banner of the 'Worker's Charter Movement' to press for the common demands of the whole working class people of India. Fighting the different owners separately, usually forms various sections among the workers and thus weakens the whole struggle, which ultimately benefits the owner. Following this reason, the 'Worker's Charter Movement' is presenting all the demands of the whole working class, in front of the ruling class of the country.

It is true that some independent labour organizations, unions and labour journals active in different parts of the country along with a few small labour assemblies (Mazdoor Panchayet) set up for debates and discussions on the same; played a major role in formulating the demands mentioned in this charter and extending it to the workers as well, but at the same time it also has to be

clarified that this movement as a whole is not under the banner of any union, organization or political party at all. The main aim is that the 'Workers Charter Movement' should become the struggle of all those people, whose demands are mentioned in the charter, thus to transform it into an unified struggle of the whole working class of the country. This movement will run in different phases and cycles. It can also be considered as a symbolic start, on the eve of 125th anniversary of the historical 'May day' and also the first step towards the long march for the liberation of the working class.

Today, this start is a symbolic one because the huge labour population is divided and unorganized as well. The number of urban and rural proletariat along with the semi proletarians in India, is about 75 crores. It will also gain support of the workers belonging to the lower middle class, who are constantly been oppressed by this suppressive regime. Together, it would become a larger power to stand tall. The demand for the rights of these 3/4th of the total population would surely attain its height if properly initiated. Since the past few months, we have been visiting every possible slums, industrial areas, lodges, lanes and by-lanes in the worker's slums and even door to door, where ever workers live, to educate the workers about the charter and get it signed by them. Night meetings and campaigning of the charter by forming small groups, are also held in several areas to support the same.

Therefore we appeal to all the people to build solidarity and stand by this movement. If you are a worker then don't forget to sign this charter yourself, get it signed by the fellow workers and also be present at the Jantar Mantar (Delhi) on 1st may. Even if you are not a worker, still go to the labour colonies and slums around you, educate them about the charter and its implications, get it signed by them and stand with us at the Jantar Mantar to express solidarity on the said date. Though the signatures in this charter should be of the worker's alone but who ever agrees with these demands should certainly reach Delhi to express solidarity.

.The middle class people are evidently unhappy with the corruption issue but ain't it the biggest corruption which constantly denies the workers, the fruit they yield with their blood and tears? Denying the basic fundamental right to the 80% of the population cannot be claimed as a justice done. Anguish of the people is mounting high and the day this dormant volcano wakes up, the pillars of the heaven will be terribly shaken for sure.

The beginning of every long journey starts with a small step. We invite you to join and stand by this campaign for the sake of humanity and justice.

- *Convening Committee, Worker's Charter Movement - 2011.*